

Smokefree Newsletter Summer 2025

**Better
Health**

North
Somerset

Smokefree Support

**Welcome to the Summer 2025 Edition
Smokefree North Somerset News.**

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CJ's Summer Blog

Why relapse is not the end

Summer brings us longer days, hopefully warmer weather, and a natural sense of renewal. As everything around us begins to bloom again, it's a good moment for us as Smokefree Advisors to reflect on the work we do—and why it matters, even when it's tough.

This brings me onto relapse. One of the hardest parts of your role is watching a client/patient relapse after progress. You've encouraged them, built trust, and cheered their achievements. Then they slip, and you may wonder if your time and effort made any difference at all.



But yes, it did!!!

Professor Robert West, one of the UK's leading authorities on addiction and smoking cessation, offers a helpful perspective: "Relapse is the rule, not the exception. The key is not whether someone lapses, but how quickly they recover." Smoking is a powerful addiction, shaped by habit, biology, and environment. Most people will relapse at least once—but each quit attempt still brings them closer to success.

It's also important to acknowledge the very real pressures you face. You're balancing multiple clients/patients, paperwork, targets, and often wider responsibilities within your service or team. You may feel like you're being pulled in several directions at once—and that you don't always have enough time to give each client/patient the attention they need.

But even small interventions can make a big difference. A single conversation, a moment of compassion, a reminder that someone believes in them—these things stick. West notes that “Most smokers make multiple quit attempts before succeeding. Each attempt teaches them something new.” Often, it won't be all the excellent knowledge you shared, or even how good the medication was, what they remember most is the advisor who didn't give up on them. I remember a client we had, let's call him David, who tried and relapsed 17 times, but we didn't give up. David has now been smokefree for 5 years.

This summer let's reframe relapse not as failure, but as feedback. What led to it? What can we learn from it? Guide your clients/patients through reflection, not shame. Help them see that every attempt builds resilience. As Robert West reminds us in his book *The SmokeFree Formula*: “Treat smoking not as a moral failing, but as a challenge of behaviour and biology.”

You are not just helping people quit—you're helping them keep trying. In a system where time is short and demands are high, your continued effort is extraordinary. You are part of a movement that saves lives and changes communities.

So, take a breath, soak in the summer air, and remember: You matter. Your work matters. And the next time someone is ready to try again, they'll remember the advisor who stood by them—even when they stumbled.

References:

West, R. (2013). *Theory of Addiction*, 2nd ed. Wiley-Blackwell.

West, R. (2014). *The SmokeFree Formula: A Revolutionary Way to Stop Smoking*. Orion Publishing.

Meet the Team

Tina Demile



Hello, I'm Tina, a new smoke free advisor, for Smokefree North Somerset. I started last October, and joined just as the team had a big influx of clients, so had to get up to speed very quickly.

My role is to provide clients with evidence-based support in a range of settings, including 1-2-1s, group and telephone support.

What I love about my job:

Supporting smokefree groups, empowering smokers to share with others in the group their highs and lows they may be facing and sharing ways to overcome their problems/triggers and cravings whilst encourage them with their quit smoking journey. The group (including myself) get very excited when the carbon monoxide monitor readings are lower after clients have quit smoking.

My background was as a Social Worker, I love meeting new people and seeing the dynamics from a group and the experience everyone brings along. I also enjoy how a group flourishes over the weeks which feels so rewarding and gives me job satisfaction.

Someone that inspires me:

I have my grandparents to be very grateful for and who have inspired me in many ways. My granddad (I called him Grampy, and he was my rock) lived until 98; He survived D-Day during WW2. When I would feel anxious, he would tell me:

"When your time is up, its time and not before so don't waste your life worrying".

There are many wonderful quotes, however the one that always jumps out at me is:

"Your Happiness and Health is your Wealth" from my wonderful Nanny Mary who passed away a few years ago at 101.

Finally, I just want to share with you that I was a heavy smoker for 30 years, making several quit attempts. Over 15 years ago, when I accompanied my daughter, Catherine to St Michaels Hospital for the scan of my first grandchild, Catherine gave me the choice of being her birthing partner or staying well away from her and the baby unless I gave up smoking. There was only one decision to make, and the rest is history! I cannot thank my daughter enough for prolonging my life. This was one of my biggest achievements and it gives me great pleasure in being part of the smokefree team to support others with a smokefree healthier journey.

Advisor Questions

These are real questions sent in, and we include them as they may help others with similar queries:

Q1

I have a patient that is due to be on her 12th week of taking Varenicline, however, she is only taking 1mg a day.

Can you confirm how she would wean herself off these tablets or would she just stop taking them ?

Answer

According to NICE, Varenicline may be stopped without tapering the dose. However, immediately after stopping treatment with varenicline, up to 3% of people experience an increase in irritability, urge to smoke, depression, or insomnia. Consider tapering the dose in these people.

Back when we had Champix, for some, we gave a starter pack which they took backwards. By that I mean starting on day 14 and finishing at day 1. Or if they were on the full dose, using that last 2 weeks to last four weeks by tapering down to 1 tablet a day. Most however were able to stop without titrating down.

With your patient, as she is already on half the dose she should be fine just to stop.

Please see link below:

[Varenicline | Prescribing information | Smoking cessation | CKS | NICE](#)

An important thing to reiterate is don't have that first puff of a cigarette, after you have finished the course, it's a choice. Remember the importance of NOPE -Not one puff ever.

Q2

I just wondered if there was anything you would advise for patients experiencing nausea from Varenicline?

I have one patient, since upping the dose to 1mg twice a day is struggling with nausea for a few hours after taking it. She has tried ginger biscuits and that worked for a bit but not now. Hopefully, you might have a suggestion.

Answer

Yes, about a third of patients experience some sort of nausea, which usually resolves in time, especially when completely off tobacco.

Make sure the patient is leaving at least 12 hours between doses and takes the tablet with food.

If severe, the dose can be reduced to half (0.5mg) until symptoms resolve.

Antiemetic medication can also be prescribed if none of the above works.

Q3

I need some advice over a patient please.

He actually quit a couple of years ago and started vaping, which got out of hand and he came to me for support as he'd reached a point where he'd had a cigarette and couldn't afford to keep buying the vapes. I put him on inhalators with the plan to gradually decrease as he didn't want patches. He says he's gone from 7 cartridges to 5 and can't bring himself down any further. He has COPD, calcification of the coronary artery so really can't carry on. When I spoke to him the other day, said he thought he could keep going with this

support for 6 months so whether he was just planning on keeping the prescription going at this level I don't know.

I discussed him with his GP (who's retiring this month) and he agrees we need to try and get him off nicotine. Can you suggest any alternative approaches?

Hope you can give me some ideas.

Answer

Ultimately if using NRT keeps him off smoking then the guidance is that someone can keep using it long term as a harm reduction aid, for years if necessary. The goal is to stop tobacco use not nicotine necessarily.

Patches is usually the easiest way to wean off nicotine, as it gets rid of the hand to mouth action, what was your patient's reason for not wanting them?

Your GP could prescribe varenicline as an off-licence treatment there have been some studies lately showing this works, but it is not a recommended option.

Another method would be for him to purchase a refillable vape and move down the liquid strengths gradually, as disposable vapes only tend to come in high strengths.

Ultimately it will be down to your patient to choose, the key thing being not going back to cigarettes to get his nicotine fix.

**NOTE (we have produced a handout "so you want to stop vaping" to give out to clients which will also be available on our website soon, please email CJ if you would like a copy)*

Pharmacotherapy

Guidance on Varenicline



Varenicline remains a highly effective pharmacotherapy option for smoking cessation and continues to be used across North Somerset's stop smoking services. As Smokefree advisors, understanding how to support clients through its use—including managing expectations, handling side effects, and responding to challenges such as delayed quit attempts—is key to helping more people successfully quit.

Dosing Overview

Varenicline is usually prescribed as follows:

- **Days 1–3:** 0.5 mg once daily
- **Days 4–7:** 0.5 mg twice daily
- **Day 8 onwards (to 12 weeks):** 1 mg twice daily

Clients should ideally begin varenicline **1–2 weeks before their quit date**, allowing the medication to reach steady-state levels and reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms by the time they stop smoking.

What if the Client Hasn't Quit by Week 2?

It's not uncommon for some individuals to struggle to quit exactly on their planned quit date. If your client **has not stopped smoking by the end of the second week**, consider the following:

- **Don't discontinue immediately:** Varenicline may still be effective even with a delayed quit attempt. Some people benefit from a more flexible quit approach. We would normally suggest a quit date of between day 8 and day 14 of the course, however some people can take a little longer, maybe up to 5 weeks and some even longer than that.
- **Keep working with the patient**, as taking longer is normal. Partly this will be down to biology and partly making the decision to take the step and quit. Some people expect magic to happen, which it isn't. Making a choice is definitely involved.
- **Try chatting** about the ones they are still having and what is triggering this, work on those triggers together.
- **Review and reset the quit date:** Encourage a new quit date within the next week or two. Support them with behaviour change strategies and renewed motivation.
- **Check adherence and technique:** Make sure the client is taking varenicline as prescribed and isn't missing doses.

Repeat Courses

- If a client relapses or is still struggling after completing a 12-week course, they may benefit from a **second 12-week course** of varenicline, particularly if they previously responded well. A further course of 12 weeks can be prescribed for these patients as long as they have quit by the end of the first course (12 weeks).

Current guidance supports repeat courses for those still motivated to quit. Discuss this with the client's GP to explore re-prescribing options.

Managing Side Effects

The most common side effects are:

- **Nausea** (most frequent): Advise taking varenicline with food and a full glass of water.
- **Sleep disturbances** (e.g., vivid dreams, insomnia): Taking the evening dose earlier in the day can help reduce these effects.
- **Mood changes or irritability:** Monitor closely; clients should be encouraged to report any significant mood changes. Severe symptoms may require GP review.
- **Headache or constipation:** Often transient but worth discussing with the client for reassurance and symptom relief.

Reassure clients that most side effects lessen over time and should be weighed against the significant health benefits of quitting smoking.

Key Takeaways for Advisors

- Encourage adherence and regular check-ins, especially in the first few weeks.
- Be flexible—some clients may need longer to quit, and that's okay.
- Reinforce motivation, manage expectations, and normalise setbacks.
- Collaborate with prescribers if a second course is needed or side effects become unmanageable.

By providing clear, consistent support and being proactive in addressing common issues, you can help more clients achieve a smoke-free life with the aid of varenicline.

Dates for your diary

2 Day New Advisor Training



Join us on Wednesday 24th September & Wednesday 1st October 2025, for our 2-day training that provides you with the skills to support people to quit smoking in North Somerset.

Venue: TBC

Time: 9:30am - 4:30pm

You will need to attend both days

This training is suitable for anyone already working in a healthcare, educational or community service setting. Please share with colleagues and other interested parties and let us know via email at smokefree@n-somerset.gov.uk if you wish to book any places.

Advisor Update Training

Join us on Wednesday 10th September 2025 for our biannual update, where we will have a fabulous guest speaker and all the latest news on medications and the world of tobacco control.

Venue: TBC

Time: TBC

This training is suitable for all North Somerset Smokefree Advisors. Bring along your lunch, tea and coffee provided. Please share with colleagues and other interested parties and let us know via email at smokefree@n-somerset.gov.uk if you wish to book any places

Stoptober



Get ready for this year's annual national quit attempt, info packs can be ordered from the campaign resource centre a little nearer the time. Maybe you are planning an event or display, let us know and take some pictures.

[Better Health Quit Smoking | Campaigns | Campaign Resource Centre](#)

Health and wellness event

After the success of the Winter Health Promotion event 2024, we are excited to announce our up-and-coming Health Promotion Day, in partnership with We are Super.

A community of startups, freelancers and small businesses, located in the Sovereign Centre Weston-Super-Mare.

We also have a new name for the event....

Wellness in Action!

Connecting you to better health and wellness

The purpose of this event is to bring wellness partners & the public together to focus on health in the winter months. The event aims to improve knowledge and awareness of what support is available within Weston, while encouraging individuals to take charge of their health.





When: Thursday 9th October 2025

Where: We are Super Studios. Sovereign Centre, High Street, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1HL

Time: 10am – 2pm

For more information please email:
deborah.stone@n-somerset.gov.uk

Swap to Stop



Remember, if you have patients who you are supporting e.g. completing an IRS form for; that would like a free vape and liquids, you can email us their details.

We will need:

- **Patient name,**
- **Date of birth**
- **Address**
- **Contact details e.g. mobile number & email address**

Send us an email us: smokefree@n-somerset.gov.uk and we will email your patient with a link to order their vape.

New Swap to Stop Portal

Alternatively, maybe you have a patient/client who wants to “do it on their own” without support, but would still like a vape, you can direct these patients to our website where they can order a vape, and be followed up by the team at Totally Wicked (our vape supplier).

[Swap to Stop | Better Health North Somerset](#)

BNSSG Swap to Stop Portal

Click here to sign up for your free Swap to Stop kit.

[Follow link](#)



Smokefree Groups

This is something we have recently started up again after a large influx of referrals. And Tina and Di have written this article:

Experience of running our smokefree groups.

We have been working together within a group setting to support people in North Somerset to quit smoking for the past six months. We find our work very rewarding and feel privileged to be able to have this opportunity to change people's lives for the better.

When a client initially arrives at a group, we see a lot of anxieties or disbelief that a group can work for them, however after one session of sitting with others in the group the anxieties and concerns are lowered.

A few of the clients that have quit smoking from attending a group have continued to visit the to support new clients to stop smoking and to check in with us.

Our clients feel a sense of community from coming to a group that we have set up in the area that they live and soon find common ground with one another. Our clients are encouraged to share with one another their experiences and challenges of what works for them or what concerns they have. Sometimes there can be a lot of excitement and banter which makes our job very enjoyable.

The clients thrive on taking their weekly carbon monoxide reading test whilst having a friendly competition on who scored the lowest. This alongside their choice of Nicotine Replacement Therapy or other medication gives our new clients the incentive to decide their quit date and feel very motivated to be smokefree.

A lot of our clients were referred from the Targeted Lung Health Check and have had a scare with Cancer or COPD, giving them yet another thing in common that they are able to relate to as well as a very good reason to want to quit.



Feedback is constantly given from our group members saying things like

"I have only been able to quit and stay quit because of this group and the support by the other members"

We feel that the group has given them a sense of purpose, a voice as well as a positive social feel whilst we have been able to provide our knowledge and training in a safe environment.

We have noticed that our quit rates from clients attending the group are much higher than telephone calls and that is indeed another rewarding benefit for us.

How do I get my patients/clients into a group?

Would like to offer a smokefree group in your setting? If so, CJ is happy to come and do some additional training if you'd like to offer this. They are cost effective and outcome effective intervention.

If you are unable to offer groups, you can refer clients/patients to our existing groups, by phoning or emailing us here at Smokefree North Somerset. We currently have four rolling groups:

- Monday, 6:30-7:30pm at Hope Church in Worle
- Wednesday, 11-12pm at Clevedon Community Centre
- Thursday, 1-2pm at We Are Super Studios in The Sovereign, Weston
- Friday, 10-11pm at Pill Community Centre

Interesting Articles

Vaping Myths

Article by cancer research UK [Does vaping cause popcorn lung? | Cancer Research UK](#)

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health's latest report

[A Roadmap to a Smokefree Country: No one starts, everyone stops, no profit in tobacco - ASH](#)

USA: Doubts raised over health claims for heated tobacco products

A recent report by tobacco watchdog STOP challenges the tobacco industry's portrayal of heated tobacco products (HTPs) as safer alternatives to conventional cigarettes or effective tools for quitting smoking. The analysis, based on recent scientific reviews and market data, finds no solid evidence that these products reduce health risks or assist with cessation.

Instead, concerns are growing over their potential harms, which include the presence of toxic substances in emissions and risks associated with environmental waste. The report also criticises the industry's marketing strategies that appeal to young people and highlights a lack of independent research, with many studies linked to tobacco companies themselves. Despite claims of transformation, major tobacco firms continue to profit from both cigarette and HTP sales.

Source: STOP, 30 April 2025

STOP - [Understanding Heated Tobacco Products: Current Issues and Recent Findings](#)

Disposable vape ban

[The 2025 Disposable Vapes Ban: What You Need to Know - ASH](#)

Podcast: Let's talk e-cigarettes

In this podcast, Associate Professor Jamie Hartmann-Boyce and Associate Professor Nicola Lindson discuss the new evidence in e-cigarette research and interview Professor Eden Evins from Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School about her randomized clinical trial on varenicline for youth vaping cessation.

[Let's talk e-cigarettes, April 2025 | University of Oxford Podcasts](#)

Reducing smoking in pregnancy in England—a public health success story

[Reducing smoking in pregnancy in England—a public health success story | The BMJ](#)

Mental health resources

Vaping in Mental health - resources

Please see below the resources from the recent webinar **Preparing mental health trusts for the disposable vapes ban**, the National Mental Health and Learning Disability Nurse Directors Forum's webinar **Revisiting smokefree mental health and vaping**, as well as South Yorkshire's Smokefree starts website.

ASH webinar resources: Preparing mental health trusts for the disposable vapes ban

We are pleased to share the full recording of our recent webinar on preparing for the disposable vapes ban in mental health trusts, which you can access on our YouTube channel [HERE](#).

Additionally, we have included a checklist created by the National Smoke-Free Mental Health (& TTD) Leads group, which will help trusts prepare for the upcoming disposable vape ban. If you're interested in joining the group, which meets bimonthly, please feel free to contact sarah.harding10@nhs.net

Further links:

ASH blog: [The 2025 Disposable Vapes Ban: What You Need to Know](#)

DEFRA [guidance](#) on the single-use vapes ban.

DEFRA toolkit for businesses: [UK Single-use vapes ban](#)

Webinar resources: Revisiting smokefree mental health and vaping

The National Mental Health and Learning Disability Nurse Directors Forum recently hosted a webinar '**Revisiting smokefree mental health and vaping: exploring the challenges and opportunities in mental health in-patient settings.**'

The webinar covered:

- Findings from the ASH survey of smokefree policies and tobacco dependence treatment services in NHS mental health trusts in England
- Overview of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill & The Environmental Protection (Single-use Vapes) (England) Regulations 2024
- Disposable vape ban: challenges and opportunities for mental health Trusts
- Vending machine ban: challenges and opportunities for mental health Trusts
- Disposal of vaping devices

You can access the full recording of the webinar, [here](#).

You can access the slides from the following links:

- GAP, [Vape Recycling](#)
- ELFT, [Case Study](#)
- KCL, [Overview & disentangling new legislation - what's on the horizon?](#)
- ASH, [Findings from the ASH survey of smokefree policies and tobacco treatment services](#)

Smokefree Starts: Smoking and mental health resources

South Yorkshire's [Smokefree Starts](#) website now hosts editable resources on smoking and mental health, including leaflets and posters for both the public and professionals. Users can add their own logos and service details. A downloadable discussion guide is also available.

You can access the resources online, [here](#).

Director of Public Health Report

Directors of Public Health produce an independent annual report on the health and wellbeing of their local population. Each annual report highlights a pressing public health challenge and opportunity and makes recommendations for change.

This year's North Somersets Director of Public Health Report "Time to stop smoking for good", focusses on the current landscape of smoking in North Somerset. Together we have achieved a significant reduction in smoking rates across North Somerset however, a significant health inequality remains.

We have a collective vision to achieve a smokefree North Somerset by 2030. We want to see smoking prevalence reduced to 5% or less in the next 6 years. Details related to the harms of smoking in North Somerset, and current and future work to reduce these harms can be found throughout this report, read the report to see how you and your organisations along with our partners can help us to realise our ambition of eradicating smoking and it's harmful effects on individuals and society as a whole.

Click below to read the report and watch the video

[Director of Public Health Report 2025 - Time to stop smoking for good | Better Health North Somerset](#)

Thank you for reading, and for all the work you do to help reduce tobacco consumption across North Somerset. We'd love to hear your stories, case studies or ideas for the next issue, please get in touch with CJ @ Christine.jones@n-somerset.gov.uk

**Thank
You**